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commercialism, employing force and relying on an army to win for it new markets, when it comes under the blast of the tornado of wrath that a challenge to liberty involves, is a reed shaken in the wind. The fathers and mothers of the world are not going to let the trading, banking, and manufacturing circles of victorious nations capitalize the valor of dead soldiers, as usually has been the case in the past.

**K**ING ALBERT of Belgium, not long since, went over the Verdun region in France. He had a "Blue Devil" guide. The latter quotes the monarch as saying, after he left the scene of terrible carnage, "Sherman said all that there is to be said about war in three words." Brevity sometimes is the soul of wisdom as well as of wit.

**W**AR censorship of news was severely criticized at the recent meeting of the British Imperial Press Congress sitting in Ottawa. Other resolutions carried showed that the iron has gone deeply into the souls of working journalists who have had their freedom hampered since 1914. But hardly has escape from one foe been compassed when another appears in the form of great cable, telegraph, and telephone monopolies that plan not only to distribute news, but also to control it. Happily the new Premier of the Dominion, Arthur Meighen, in his formal speech, welcoming journalists from the empire to the Dominion, said: "The distribution of news is now the greatest trust in the whole body democratic. The opportunities for good were infinite; the possibilities of mischief just as vast."

**M**R. H. G. WELLS, in a speech he recently made before the first hundred British airmen, pioneers in the art of aviation, spoke with the authority of a scientist and with that imagination which led him long before aviation became practicable to indicate in his quasi-scientific fiction what it might ultimately do. In this speech he called attention to the internationalizing effect which aviation for normal commercial and touring purposes is bound to have upon life in Europe. The present network of boundaries and the rapidly developing code of control of flyers by passports, examinations by customs officers, and like measures, will strangle the new art of navigation for a time. Then will come a revolt against the "hopeless futility" of dealing with the new mode of intercommunication on any nationalistic or imperialistic basis. Mr. Wells sees so much farther, often, than any statesman of his time that his words are a welcome addition to the collection of optimistic opinions about the future of civilization.

## THE AALAND ISLANDS' DISPUTE AND THE LEAGUE

By A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**T**HE case of the Aaland Islands, now before the Council of the League of Nations, is of peculiar interest, not only because it directly concerns peace between Sweden and Finland, but still more because it shows for the first time the successive steps by which the League of Nations may be called in to prevent war.

Curiously enough, this dispute has brought into play nearly every method of procedure open to the Council, including the bringing up of the case by a disinterested party, the status before the Council of a small State not a member of the Council and of another State not a member of the League, and the reference of the purely judicial elements of the problem to a court of justice. Regardless of the immediate problem involved, the dispute is vitally important as outlining a method of international co-operation wholly unknown until the creation of the League of Nations.

By way of preface, it should be said that the Aaland Islands form a small archipelago contiguous to the shores of Finland. A part of Russia until the break-up of the old Empire, they are now claimed by Finland on the grounds of inheritance and of contiguity, and by Sweden on the ground of self-determination. The contest between the two States has become so bitter that Sweden has temporarily withdrawn her minister from Helsingfors and war has been freely predicted.

It was at this point that the League of Nations began to function. Great Britain, a third party, with no interest in the dispute except as it involved the general preservation of peace, referred the matter on June 19 to the Council of the League of Nations, under Article XI of the Covenant, which says: "It is also declared to be the friendly right of each member of the League to bring to the attention of the Assembly or of the Council any circumstances whatever, affecting international relations, which threaten to disturb international peace or the good understanding between nations upon which peace depends." Automatically, therefore, a process looking toward a peaceful solution was set in motion. This process would have been impossible under the pre-war system of international disorganization before the creation of the League machinery. By means of it a disinterested State was enabled, as a matter of right and without assuming an unfriendly attitude toward either contestant, to bring the question immediately before an existing world organization.

The facts of the case were sent immediately to all States in the League, the members of the Council were called together, and Sweden and Finland were invited to submit statements. The attention of the world thus became focused upon the dispute and the task of evolving a peaceful settlement became a matter of immediate international interest. It was exactly this step which was lacking in late July and August, 1914, when Sir Edward Grey made every effort to bring the nations together about a common conference table.

The Council assembled in London on July 9. The first question before it was the status of Sweden and Finland in the deliberations. Sweden was not a mem-

ber of the Council, while Finland was not even a member of the League. It was obvious, however, that both should participate in the discussions, in order that the decision might be arrived at voluntarily and by agreement of all.

Sweden was immediately admitted as a member of the Council, under Article IV of the Covenant, which says: "Any member of the League not represented on the Council shall be invited to send a representative to sit as a member at any meeting of the Council during the consideration of matters specially affecting the interests of that member of the League."

Finland's position was more difficult, however, as, though that country has applied for membership in the League, she cannot be formally admitted until the first Assembly. Nevertheless, it was agreed by all members of the Council, including the representative of Sweden, that Finland should be accorded full rights of membership.

Thereupon both nations presented their cases, first by written statements and later by verbal explanations. The arguments need not be discussed in detail, for they are wholly overshadowed by the fact that an international organization existed where such arguments could be presented and weighed at all. Both nations, in short, placed their cases before what might be called the bar of international judgment, and were given the opportunity of learning the opinion of the disinterested outside world.

Vastly more than this, however, lay behind the meeting, because Sweden, as a member of the League, and Finland, as a State, having accepted the obligations of the League in this dispute, had bound themselves not to go to war until after the award of the Council, and even then not until after three months had elapsed. This, of course, would so postpone war as to give the agencies of peace and of world public opinion the fullest opportunity to act.

The interior workings of the Council in such cases were most advantageously illustrated in this particular dispute. Finland immediately claimed that the dispute was a wholly domestic one, beyond the reach of the League of Nations. She cited Article XV, which reads: "If the dispute between the parties is claimed by one of them, and is found by the Council, to arise out of a matter which by international law is solely within the domestic jurisdiction of that party, the Council shall so report, and shall make no recommendation as to its settlement."

This claim raised a direct question of law. The first step, then, was not the bringing about of a rapprochement between the two parties, but rather the interpretation of various local documents. Obviously, that phase of the question could be far better handled in a court of law than in a council of diplomatic representatives.

Exactly this contingency is foreseen in Article XIV, which says that the Permanent Court of International Justice may "give an advisory opinion upon any question or dispute referred to it by the Council or by the Assembly." In other words, special care has been taken to allow the diplomatic branch of the League of Nations to separate disputes into their component parts, in order that purely legal questions may be entrusted to a purely

legal body. This is a great stride in advance of anything that has hitherto been possible and very largely affects the charge that Council decisions will be based on purely political considerations.

As it happens, the Permanent Court is now in the process of formation and as a result it has been necessary, in the Aaland case, to refer the legal question to a special committee of three jurists. Care is to be taken to appoint men who not only are recognized as impartial, but who come from smaller nations, having no material interest in the question.

The League is proceeding on the principle that it is far better to take necessary time to arrive at a decision the justice of which cannot be disputed than to take a hasty, ill-formed conclusion, which would discredit belief in the League's impartiality. It is hoped that, when the jurists report on the legal point and the Council goes on to offer a solution of the whole broad question, world public opinion, and especially that in Finland and Sweden, will accept that decision as eminently just and wise.

Meanwhile the situation naturally remains delicate. At the meeting on July 12 Mr. Balfour, as President of the Council, asked both the Swedish and Finnish representatives to give public assurance that they would take every precaution not to aggravate it. Both of these men, standing before the Council and the public, acceded to this request. Thus, for the first time, two nations have stood before the world and agreed to take no action to advance their own material interests during the time necessary for the other disinterested nations of the world to seek to work out for them a just and peaceful solution.

## GROWTH IN NATIONAL DEBTS OF THE WORLD\*

By O. P. AUSTIN

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THE national debts of the world now approximate \$265,000,000,000, against \$44,000,000,000 at the beginning of the great European war. The interest charges on the grand total now exceed \$9,000,000,000 per annum, as against about \$1,750,000,000 in the year before the war. The per capita of national indebtedness averages, for the aggregate population of all the countries for which debt figures are available, about \$150 per capita, against approximately \$27 per capita in 1913, and annual interest charges about \$6 per capita at the present time, as against about \$1 per capita in 1913.

These figures are, of course, in very round terms. It is not possible to measure with extreme statistical accuracy the total national indebtedness of the world in any designated month or year, since the official statements of national debt are in many cases comparatively infrequent and in some instances stated in terms not readily comparable with those of other countries, while the figures covering the interest rates on the various issues, and therefore the annual interest charges, are even more difficult.

In general terms, however, it may be stated that the

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